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PHASE 3-D LAUNCH DELAYED

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In a formal announcement from Paris on March 24th, the European Space Agency (ESA) said that the second test flight of their new Ariane 5 booster has now been re-scheduled from July to mid-September, 1997. It is this flight, Ariane 502, on which Phase 3-D is currently manifested.

According to their latest announcement, this action was being taken by ESA and CNES (the French Space Agency which manages the Ariane 5 program for ESA) in order to "improve (the booster's) robustness, increase the operational margins and allow for degraded operating modes".

In a joint statement a day after the ESA announcement, Phase 3-D Project Leader and AMSAT-DL President, Dr. Karl Meinzer, DJ4ZC, along with AMSAT-NA President Bill Tynan, W3XO, expressed continuing confidence that ESA and CNES will succeed in completing all the tasks necessary for a successful flight test of Ariane 502.

"Naturally, we are disappointed that our launch will not be as soon as we had hoped", said Meinzer. "However, I am pleased that ESA and CNES are taking care to improve the operational margins for the Ariane 5 booster. This action helps give us renewed confidence in the overall probability for a successful launch of our satellite," he said.

Both Meinzer and Tynan emphasized, however, that this launch delay, like the earlier ones, means that the total cost of the Phase 3-D Project will increase significantly. Even before the latest ESA announcement, AMSAT-DL and AMSAT-NA were projecting a combined budget shortfall of about two hundred thousand dollars (US) in the money needed to complete their respective tasks on the project.

"This shortfall can only increase now as a result of this latest schedule change", said Tynan. Both AMSAT leaders urged everyone to continue doing as much as they possibly can to insure the needed funds will be in place for the completion and launch of Phase 3-D.

Stay tuned to the AMSAT News Service for further details on the completion, testing and launch of the AMSAT Phase 3-D International Satellite.

[ANS thanks Karl Meinzer, DJ4ZC, Werner Haas, DJ5KQ, Bill Tynan, W3XO, and Keith Baker, KB1SF, for the information that went into this bulletin item.]

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